

4139 C. 104.

England — Churches, etc. — Baptists

— Kent and Sussex Assoc. of



— Trin. Bapt. Ch.

THE
CIRCULAR LETTER
OF THE
ELDERS AND MESSENGERS
OF THE
BAPTIST CHURCHES:

Harvey H. H. H.

B R E V I A T E S.

THE church at *Tenderden*, having fixed on *Tuesday* the 5th of *June*, for the ordination of Brother *Lloyd* for their Pastor; he was accordingly ordained. The work of the ordination being over at *five* o'clock, the ministers and messengers of the churches met; Brother *Slinn* prayed, Brother *Copping* was chosen moderator; the preliminaries of the association, and the letters from the churches were read, their contents considered, and minutes taken. Different causes of joy and sorrow, we trust, made correspondent impressions on our hearts; (what occasion each of us have to cry out my leanness my leanness) attended to somethings, which required the consideration of the association, the meeting was closed by prayer.

Next morning met at *six* o'clock, two Brethren engaged in prayer, Brother *Purdy* was desired to produce the circular letter, which he did, and it was read and approved; — and this service was concluded in prayer, by Brother *John Spilsted*. At *ten* the public meeting began, Brother *Gillard* prayed, Brother *Ruffel* preached, from *Cant. i. 9*. Brother *Purdy* prayed, Brother *Booker* preached, from *Isa. xl. 1, 2*. Sung proper hymns in the intervals of the other parts of worship, Brother *Morgan* closed the public worship in prayer.

At *four* o'clock met again, Brother *Cromwell* of *Cranbrook* engaged in prayer, agreed earnestly to request all the associated churches, to observe the *first Wednesday in November*, as a day of solemn humiliation, prayer and fasting; on the account of public affairs, and the state of religion.

Agreed earnestly to recommend to parents, to have their children catechised, and to take care of their morals.

Agreed to hold the next association, at *Rye, in Suffex*, on the *first Tuesday and Wednesday in June, 1782*, the ministers and messengers, to put up at the *George Inn*, Brother *Lloyd*, and Brother *Slinn*, to preach, in case of failure, Brother *Morgan*. — The ministers, and messengers, to meet at *three* o'clock *Tuesday* in the afternoon, — then the assembly was dismissed with prayer, by the moderator.

In the association churches the last year, were Baptized.	41
received by Letter.	1
	<hr/>
in all,	42
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Dead.	12
Excluded,	15
Dismissed	3
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	30
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Increase	12

T H E

THE
CIRCULAR LETTER
OF THE
ELDERS AND MESSENGERS
OF THE
BAPTIST CHURCHES:

Meeting at *Ashford, Sandhurst, Smarden, Tenterden*, in KENT;
Rye, Rotherfield, Weaversfield, in SUSSEX; assembled in Affo-
ciation at *Tenterden*, the 5th and 6th of *June*, 1781: To the
several Churches they represent send Christian Salutation.

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

BEING earnestly concerned for your Welfare, and wishing your perfecti-
on, that ye may stand complete in all the will of God; and that you may
have lack of nothing: We would not neglect any means, which we judge
may have a tendency to forward your Souls after a godly sort; nor omit any
labour or service, that may promote the grand object we have in charge from
God to you, namely the edification of your Souls. Permit us Brethren we be-
seech you, in this our general Letter to the Churches we represent; to give
you a word of exhortation. And as we account ourselves Debtors to you,
and think it our duty to spend and be spent in the service of you all; we may
reasonably hope, that this our endeavour to serve you, will meet your appro-
bation: and this token of our love in seeking to stir up your pure minds to a
remembrance of Christ and your duties; will be acceptable to you, and recei-
ved by you in love.

Consider then our beloved Brethren, that you are fellow heirs of the Grace
of life; that you have all one Father even God: whose Children you are by
adopting favour; and are manifested as standing in this relation to God, by your
Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And as the Children of the Most High; you
are bound by ties of the most endearing kind, unfeignedly to love and honor,
the Father of mercies and Father of Glory. And the fraternity which subsists
between your selves, calls upon you to love one another. May God there-
fore help you to look to that Love and Grace, which made you his children
and Brethren in his Family; and when seen by precious faith; it cannot fail
of actuating you to sobriety and godliness; and of leading you to cleave to God
and to each other, as the purchase of Christ's Blood: There is but one Lord
Jesus Christ, and one common salvation for God's family; the saints have a
joint interest in Christ and his salvation, are joint heirs of the riches and glo-
ry of their Saviour: all their concerns with Christ are one; that whether they
hear his word, read the Bible, pray, wait on him, or praise his name; it is
all for one thing, their being completely saved. Let this be duly considered
by you, that you all have but one Christ, and that you are heirs of the same
Grace of God, and that it is by the Grace of God that you are what you are.
It is his Grace that hath made the difference between you and others; all your
holiness, meetness for heaven, gifts and spiritual understanding, come from

the boundless Ocean of Grace in Christ. And you will find cause to be humble, to be little in your own eyes, to love the friends of the Bridegroom, who are partakers with you, of the riches of God's glorious Kingdom. Do you all go to the same Jesus? to the same fountain of the waters of life? to the same precious blood for cleansing? to the same doctrines and promises of God for living bread? and to the same fulness of Christ for comfort and help life and salvation? This surely is a very strong argument, to prevail upon you to mutual agreement; that being equally obligated to Christ for your salvation; you are bound to unite together to discover your obligation to him. To this end you are incorporated into a Church state; that in your fellowship, a semblance of Glory and of the church above, may be seen in you; for in heaven they all with one voice ascribe, salvation to God and the Lamb! In the way you are saved, God has not left the smallest matter, that can possibly be a bone of contention among you; the Gospel is a scheme fraught with peace, even peace to them who are nigh, and to them who are afar off; it is Grace from the bottom to the top stone, no merit, all were criminals, all saved by mercy, a free unmerited mercy. Seeing then Brethren, you are partakers of one Christ, and of one salvation; heirs of the same Grace and Glory, let your mouths be one in prayer and praise to God, your hands and bodies be one in duty, and your hearts and spirits one, to exalt your Redeemer: and where God assists his people, to join heart and hands together to glorify him: neither men nor devils shall harm them.

There is but one Spirit, to teach, to anoint and seal, the children of God; to the day of redemption. This one and the self same Spirit, distributing his gifts and grace to every one of you as he pleases; is a most delightful subject, attended with extraordinary advantages. Since,

First, It is from the indwelling and teachings of the Spirit of God, that the saints are brought to know one another, to be of the Election of Grace, and the called according to God's purpose; when they are led to lay open their hearts and experience one to another; or to give an account of the work of God upon their souls, and of the change wrought in them: this work, being similar in all; proclaims it to be wrought, by the same Almighty Artist.

Secondly, The whole progress of the work of grace, being carried on by the Spirit, has something in it exceedingly pleasing to the children of God, in their relation of it one to another; to see such a oneness in their experience: which leads them to conclude, both for themselves and Friends; that it is the Lord's work, and it is also marvelous in their eyes!

Thirdly, In relating of real experience, God's people by comparing notes, find their copies so to tally together, as if they had each taken them down from the Spirit; their burdens and complaints, their groanings and feelings, their light and joy, their peace and hope, are very much alike: this the Devil could not devise with all his cunning, neither can it be the work of ignorant jarring corruption, but of the good Spirit of God. And God's people, by discovering one to another his dealings with their souls, find it abundantly useful. We wish you Brethren, to be frequently engaged in this pleasant work, of declaring one to another what God has done for your souls; it will be a means of increasing your love one to another, and of keeping you together in the ways of God, and of administering comfort to each others souls. All is union, that comes from the teachings of the Spirit of God; sinful disagreement comes from another quarter; that is from ignorance, selfwill, or our turbulent passions: pray then to be guided by the Spirit, and to live and walk in the Spirit; and then you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

God has given you Brethren but one way to walk in, and we read but of one fellowship and communion of saints; so that your interest lies, in your communion, and walking with God, and one another. And to keep together in God's high way; to unite in this sacred fellowship, is the work of your heavenly calling. Endeavour then Brethren, in the strength of God in your daily conversation, to hold out to the world, the advantages you have over it; in being well principled, by living in love, and the most perfect harmony together. We may add, that the Children of God, have but one interest, Christ, their own, and their neighbours; the Lord has joined these together. If you seek not Christ's interest, nor promote his cause, nor lay your selves out for his glory; you ruin your own interest, by the neglect of his. If you love not, nor seek the real good of your neighbour, and your fellow Christian, you hurt your better interest; you cannot be said to be seeking your own souls good, while seeking your Brother's ill; for self seeking, abstracted from the glory of Christ, is self destroying. We may be carnally wise in so doing, but are spiritually foolish, may get some carnal good, and gain a selfish end, but we loose a better good, and more noble enjoyments; it is like gathering pebbles, and casting away of gold: a person by such a conduct, so looses sight of Christ, and his best comforts, and so degenerates into fleshly things, that he pays dear for his self seeking; From hence it appears, that it is both your duty and privilege, to serve and please God, and to serve and please each one his neighbour for his good, and to his edification, and love is a bond of that perfection, that cannot fail of uniting your hearts together. And without love, and a union of Love among us, preaching the word, prayer, talking of religion, professing godliness, knowledge, and a number of lip and bodily sacrifices, are but of little avail, to our comfort and Gods glory. But as a shell without the kernel so is a lean favoured, half starved profession of God.

We have great complaints among us, (and not without cause) that religion is upon the decline, that sluggish carnality has almost eaten out the vitals of it; indeed we have too much reason to say, Christianity's fine gold is become dim, it hath lost, (in our tempers and practice at least) much of its lustre, beauty, and noble simplicity. There are too many who strip religion of its own robes, and dress it up in a worldly litigious, angry, non-forbearing, luke warm spirit: which is using the heavenly guest exceeding ill, and a grievous offence against God. The beautiful garments of evangelical godliness, are made up of godly sorrow for sin, a life of spiritual obedience, carried on with a single eye to the glory of God, and bodies full of light; self denial, a quiet mind and peaceable spirit; Godly sincerity, and a zealous regard to the injunctions of Christ, and rules of the Gospel Fellowship; humility, a forgiving and forbearing spirit, walking in faith, hope and charity: these are not so universally worn as could be wished; nay, too much laid aside by many. And if these excellent ornaments, and cements of gospel fellowship, are found waining among us; the outward rule and polity, order and government of the church of God, and a public profession; will stand very precarious, and be continually shook. A *Tekel*, weighed in the ballance and found wanting, may justly be the melancholy motto, wrote upon our church doors, on our church ordinances and upon the foreheads of church members. And until the spirit be poured out from on high, and restore primitive purity, and help professors to put on their beautiful garments, and revive the work among us; we may boast of our knowledge, of orthodox judgments, put forth confessions of faith, noble formularies of religion, be multiplied in gifts, and cry Lord, Lord, the Temple,

ple, the Temple of the Lord; but it will be to very little purpose, if the before mentioned glory is wanting among us. We may add, that we may harangue each other upon doctrines, promises, ordinances and precepts; gossip over a system of divinity: and be but little better than a sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal. A religion of talk and noise and lifeless formality, a profession of God carried on at such a distance from him, with so little acquaintance with a vital union of the soul to Christ, will be but of little advantage to us. Brethren it is the image of Christ in your souls, which constitutes true religion, this is glory begun on earth, a heaven in the present life, and a meetness for paradise above. It is an experimental, and practical knowledge of the glory of Christ, of the power of his gospel on your hearts, of the sweetness of the word of his grace to your taste; which is the seal and evidence of his love to you, and of your meetness for glory. Your being transformed into the likeness of God, savingly enlightened to behold his glory with admiration, your being renewed and changed into the image of God, from glory unto glory, by the spirit of God; is the life and soul of a profession of the Lord; and is the grand criterion, of a flourishing state of religion among us. A grain of this religion, is worth more than millions of words, and great outward professions; with an unsavoury life, stained with frequent spots of pride, levity, peevishness and anger. If pride, envy, hatred and strife prevail against us; they will be found like pricks in our eyes, and thorns in our sides; which will most sadly defile, grieve and wound us. If God doth not maintain and preserve in you, a spirit of faith, a lively hope, fervent love, a sound mind, self mortification, and Christ admiring affections; it will be heavy work for your ministers to labour among you: they will have a to go to the Lord with heavy tidings respecting you; and be grieved at heart, to see the little success attending their labours.

Do help us brethren by your prayers, that God's word preached by us, may have access to your hearts; to cast down sin's imagery, and to erect a throne for Christ in your souls. that he may reign in you. We fear from the appearance of things, that the churches of Christ are sick, with a lingering consumption in their graces, and with a pining disease in their precious souls, and are not truly sensible, how low they are fallen; or how far their hearts are backslidden from God: sad news to tell you, but is there not cause to complain? yourselves being judges. Can then your faithful watchmen forbear to blow the trumpet in Sion, and to sound an alarm in God's holy mountain, when they see an enemy approach the gates of the city of God, to lay a formal siege against it! And is not this the case, when sin and satan draw God's people from their duties, and makes them careless of their privileges? or shall your watchmen be silent, whilst the enemy lies round your walls, and the citizens are asleep or inclined to sleepiness of soul? shall they be off from their watch and neglect to pray, and not be warned of their danger? or when the citizens are divided, and some in the quarrel begin to open the gates to let in the devil, sin and the world, by their litigious tempers, worldly spirits, backsliding hearts, and fleshly lusts can they be silent? No, brethren they are bound to cry. Little children, we write unto you that you sin not, provoke not the Lord to anger, fall not out by the way; remember you are brethren beloved of the Lord, and called to unite all your strength together, against the common enemy. We are commanded of God for your good and his glory, to cry aloud and not to spare; not to spare a right eye or right hand enticement, but to show God's people their transgressions, and the house of God's spiritual Israel their sins. Shall buyers and sellers occupy God's house of prayer? Shall litigious wrang-

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lings defile it? Shall hard speeches, backbitings, divisions and subdivisions, shew their monstrous deformities, and infect their holy assemblies, to the discredit of religion, and wounding the hearts of the godly, and the watchmen not sound the alarm? if he does not, he is far from being faithful. We say then he must cry, both to God and to you also; to God, for him to help us; to you, to exert yourselves, in the strength of God, by all godly endeavours, to expel from the habitations of peace justice and holiness, every evil that offends him. We live in an age, in which professors enjoy every indulgence they wish for; but our care to improve mercies enjoyed is very slack; which is cause of great lamentation: and some there are who do lament the darkness deadness and carnality which abound among us, but still we have but few reformers. A spirit of all prayer is wanting, but where that is bestowed on men by the Lord, they will soon find him opening the windows of heaven to pour out a blessing upon their souls, greater then they will find room to contain: a refreshing from God's presence, will add new life and vigour to their hearts, in the work and worship of God. Ply then the means of grace, wait upon the Lord, seek early, seek diligently, seek earnestly; to bring him into your assemblies, houses and hearts. You know his compassion is great, and the prayer of faith prevalent; He may say let me go, but he means not to go from you, but will come with you into his ordinances, and feast you with his loves. Have we none who are crying out how long, Lord God? how long, shall we remain in this low state, and live at this distance from thee? return we beseech thee, and visit us with thy salvation? O Brethren seek communion with God, in your duties be concerned to find Christ, that you may profit by them; these enjoyments, will lead you to occupy God's ways with pleasure and delight. Delays in the matters of God are dangerous, and give the enemy great advantage; decays and declensions in religion are very pernicious to our souls, they deface the image of Christ, and contract hardness of heart, spoil a tender conscience, lead to sporting with little sins, and to a neglect of God. That these declensions much abound, is allowed by almost all judicious christians. We Wish Brethren, to shew you the causes of these decays in Grace, and declensions in religion; but it is a very difficult task, to find out the real cause, and detest the evils: as satan not only helps men to find a cloak for their own foibles; but tempts them to cast their folly, at the doors of others. The Israelites charged *Moses and Aaron*, as being accessory to their confusion and troubles; *Ahab* charged *Elijah*, as the cause of *Israel's* calamities; *Adam* cast his sin on *Eve*, and *Eve* her's upon the Devil. Nay the very Godly themselves; under a froward spirit; lay the stumbling of their iniquity at the doors of others, and wipe their own mouths. A person that is reproved by others, for some folly committed, falls out with religion, neglects his place in the house of God, and excuses his sin, with a pretence of having been used ill. A careless negligent professor, lays the folly of his neglects, at the door of some one who has offended him; or he seeks occasion to excuse himself, by ripping up what he sees amiss in others. A litigious spirit, frequently finds a door to lay his evil at, even that of church rulers and officers. But if we cannot find any person to stigmatize with these evils, carnal security, and lifeless formality makes us so dim sighted, and sleepy hearted; that we cannot discover the badness of our frame, nor our distance from God, nor feel the weight, or perceive the strength of the chain. carnality has something in it of ease to the flesh, and often brings with it impudence; as may be seen in the church; in her carnal excuse to the Lord. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? 'Tis irksome to
flesh

flesh and blood, to be roused from this sleepy frame, to self mortification, and activity in the ways of God, Grace by a carnal frame, and backwardness to God, is exceedingly weakned; love waxes cold, zeal for God abates, and the understanding gets beclouded. From hence arises an unsuitness for duty, which makes the prophets language to be verified; strangers have devoured our strength, and we know it not; grey hairs are here and there upon us, and we perceive it not. If professors are kept from outward pollutions, under these decays; they are led to think their state is not so bad, as it really is, and so silence their consciences. *Rev. iii, 17.*

But to detect sin, is one part of our work; to pull down strong holds of sin and satan, is a labour imposed upon us by the Lord, for your edification. Difficult therefore as the work may be, to detect sin, and to find out the real cause, of declension in religion; we will by God's assistance attempt it: and endeavour to set before you, some of the causes of the low state of religion among us.

The neglect of closet prayer, is certainly one of those evils that brings feebleness of hands in the ways of God; and lead on to remissness in the duties of a public profession. It is a great slight to the son of God to neglect calling upon him; it shews a great want of reverence of his authority, and a disregard to his promises made to us, in that duty. It cannot be said of persons who neglect this duty, that they have no need to pray, or that they are so filled with grace and strength, that they want no supplies; the reverse of this is evident, that they are almost like *Ephraim*, a silly dove without an heart, or they would be wrestling with God in private.

In public prayer, men have a call to exercise their gifts with art, and may please and profit others, and yet be far from being spiritual, or humbled before God, but in private prayer, no call, nor temptation, for trappings of art or invention; there, grace leads the way, true piety desires communion with God: groaning under the burden of indwelling sin, and longing to walk worthy of God, are the things which lead saints into their closets. The neglect of this, shews a forgetfulness of God in the heart, a careless frame of mind, and that we have but few serious thoughts of God, and a better world; and where there is such lean-ness within, it will never be well without, in a public profession.

Again, a resting in a speculative knowledge of the truths of the gospel, and a being contented, with a superficial practice, of the duties of our holy profession; we fear has much contributed, to the low state of religion among us. For were professors have not a due regard, to the influence of Gods word, upon their souls and conversation, and the work and operation of the spirit upon their hearts, in performing their duties; they soon grow remiss in them, get dull, heavy, and slothful. There may be much of the Doctrines of Christ in the seat of knowledge, and upon the tongue, and many outward duties; and at the same time, but little concern to entertain Christ, and his truths in the heart.

The theory, art and science of religion, may be attained by us, and we may become tolerable judges of these things, and yet may know and feel, but very little of the power, glory, and transforming excellencies of religion upon our hearts. Even the children of God, may for a time please themselves, that they know Christ know the truth, yea know every thing necessary to be known in the scheme of religion; and yet be far from being lively; nay settled on their sound notions, and yet carnally secure; and if so, then follow decays in godliness, backwardness to duties, and often unhappy wranglings. Indeed a thirst

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after knowledge is commendable, and the heart without knowledge is not good, but there is something more than knowledge wanting, to make a christian, and to make him truly lively; Namely the grace of God in the heart, the influence of the divine Spirit, to humble and to draw forth the heart and affections after God. The Gospel, must be realized to your hearts Brethren, the truth recieved in the love of it, there must be a feeding on the word, eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, without which, there can be no life in you. And where persons get heedless as to these things, the natural consequence will be, an unfavoury spirit, hard hearts, our goings slow, our tempers unruly, and love to God and Man, very small. And the thought of being accounted wise, ingenious, and witty; may at times, go further with ministers and people; then a concern for the glory of Christ, or exalting him in our hearts, and crowning him with praises.

We wish you Brethren, to be well established in the doctrines of Christ, rooted and grounded in the truth, to have a good understandng of the truth and riches of God's everlasting love, of the choice of his people, in electing them to salvation and glory; and of his predestinating them, to the adoption of children, according to his grace. And we pray that God may give you a large acquaintance with the covenant of his grace, and with your redemption, pardon, and justification through Christ, and that you may have sound judgments, as to the efficacious grace of God in regeneration! of the perseverance of the saints, and their being eternally glorified. But there are other, very weighty concerns, you have upon you, as to these precious truths, which we wish to hold out to you; and if the Lord should bless you with the happy experience, your desires after him will exceedingly increafe.

First, you are to seek after a strong faith, and perswasion of being interested in these truths; to see that you have received life from them, a life of faith; this will lead you to rejoice in them, and esteem them to be more precious, than thousands of gold and silver. *secondly*, Feeding on the doctrines of grace with delight, eating God's word of life with joy, and embracing his truth with thankfulness; so as that it may influence your whole hearts and conversation, to glorify God. *Thirdly*, your being allured and drawn after God, by the force, power, and sweetness of his word to you, so as to run in his ways, with alacrity and delight. *Fourthly*, you want to experience their use, in purging, purifying, and cleansing your hearts from iniquity, to serve the living God. *Fifthly*, there is a necessity for you, to have truth revealed in you, and shed into your hearts abundantly; to fill you with love to Christ, and with longings and thirsting after Him. *Sixthly*, That Gospel truths enable your souls, to bless, praise, thank and magnify your God. *Seventhly*, That by Gospel grace, you are taught, and influenced to deny all ungodliness, and to live soberly, righteously and godly; that you be made swift to hear, and prepared to every good word and work. You want to be emptied of self by them, weaned from the world, so as to be counting all things as dross, for the riches of Christ; Yes, and that you be made merciful, holy, kind, liberal, and courteous; these are the saving effects of the gospel upon our hearts, and if we rest short of this experimental, and practical knowledge of the truth, it will eclipse the glory of our profession, and cause our lamps to burn dim. Therefore Brethren, in your enquiring after truth, ask for it as the bread of life to feed you, as a staff of strength to bear you up; seek for it, as a healing medicine for your sin sick souls; fly to it, as a cleansing fountain, to cleanse your polluted hearts, and as living waters, to cheer and refresh you; and as a lamp to your feet and paths.

The neglect of family prayer, is an evil, which frequently renders ineffectual, the ministration of the word and ordinances of God, and the benefits arising from the means of grace, in a public profession; and is the cause, of declensions in the ways of God. For when professors scarce converse with God for *six days* together, and scarcely keep up the face of religion in their families, what can be expected but a luke warm spirit on the Lord's-Day, in the public service of God? almost every little thing, disturbs such persons, they are seldom pleased, or satisfied. We therefore beseech you Brethren, by the gentleness and meekness of Christ, to seek to keep up family worship with life, fervour and constancy; let Parents and Masters, set a good example, and the rest that know the Lord, shew all readiness to follow them. This we believe, will be a means of bringing on, a growing delight in public ordinances. A conformity to the world also, a mingling with vain company, and joining in idle talk, is a great snare to religious men, a hinderance to the growth of religion, hurtful to their morals, and a wound to the vitals of godliness.

May it not be feared also, that our low state of religion is partly owing to a want of due attention to the work, operation and offices of the Spirit of God? not duly considering our own weakness, nor seeking him to help our infirmities? Christians going to their duties carelessly, or with self confidence, in the strength of their gifts, or by the force of dry judgment, get but little good; the word is not profitable, ordinances but as dry breasts, without him we can do nothing: it is his teaching that profits us, and his power and influence that quickens us; every sweet taste of the word is from him, as is all true delight in Christ, and every sweet view of him, our life, fervour and liberty in duties, our victory over sin and Satan is from the Spirit of God; go to him then for assistance, that by him you may have access to God, and then you will be neither barren nor unfruitful.

Another sad cause of declension in the Churches is strife. Are you not carnal? saith the Apostle, when speaking to the contentious Corinthians. The wrangler shuns the spiritual and peaceable, and seeks to find dispositions like his own, who will wrangle with him. These often call a court, set up for judges of the law, they try, cast and condemn such as stand in their way; call forth every little spot of their neighbours to be censured by them, but dwell much on their own wisdom, integrity, and the justice of their own cause! but alas! whilst they turn judges of the law, they forget that they are breaking of it; and do not consider, that evil communications corrupt good manners. Contention is a great evil in the church of God, we have not so learned Christ, His name is peace, but strife is war, and being once kindled in the church of God, tis hard to put out the fire. Who would think of seeing such bitter spirits, such evil dispositions, as sometimes shew themselves in the children of God? religion can never thrive whilst such evils abound among us; tis really awful to see temper in a holy professor set above all sacred laws; which is done when church members, for mere trifles withdraw from their Brethren, turn their backs on Christ, and leave their places in the house of God; this is strange behaviour, and no law of Christ gives any countenance to it. We are sorry to hear of unhappy breaches in the churches of God; and it would be matter of rejoicing to us to bring a cure for them, to allay the fury of a carnal temper, and unite the dear children of God together. And what shall we say to you? are you not called to peace? doth not God hate broils in his family? is not strife a slur upon the gospel of peace? and on all the possible principles of christianity? doth grace promote dissention? or the
life

life of grace in the heart cause to live in quarrels? is the new man ill natured? or the new birth, a birth in strife? God forbid! Grace hates sin, the gospel pulls it down, but strife, is setting the old man to rule the house of God, turns *Sion* into *Babel*, and peace into confusion, and every evil work. O pray for peaceable spirits, for grace to mortify church destroying tempers, that God may be honoured, in all the assemblies of his saints; consider well, what inducements you have to live in peace and harmony together; God is your Father, you are Brethren, bought with blood, and heirs of a kingdom; and should blood bought children be fierce, or irreconcilable in their tempers? God forbid, that the peace makers servants, should ever turn peace breakers.

Another sad evil, where it prevails, is a disrespect to church rulers, a contempt of just authority exercised by them, a disregard to church officers, a neglect of public ordinances, a refusal of church discipline, and forsaking assembling with their Brethren, this amounts to a conspiracy against Christ, and introduces anarchy and confusion into the church of God. And now Brethren, consider whose you are, and that your faithfulness in the Lord's work, cannot fail of meeting with his commendation, contend earnestly for the faith of the gospel, and let your conversation be as becometh it; be valiant for God's truth, fill up your places in the house of God, labour to have a good conscience towards God and Man. Keep your duties in the right place, live only on Christ, trust not in your frames, but be strong in the grace, that is in Christ Jesus, trust in his allsufficiency. Brethren pray for us, that our labours among you may be abundantly blessed, we conclude Brethren, with wishing you peace, from your's to the day of Christ.

Signed on the behalf of the assembly,

by the Moderator,

WILLIAM COPPING.

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